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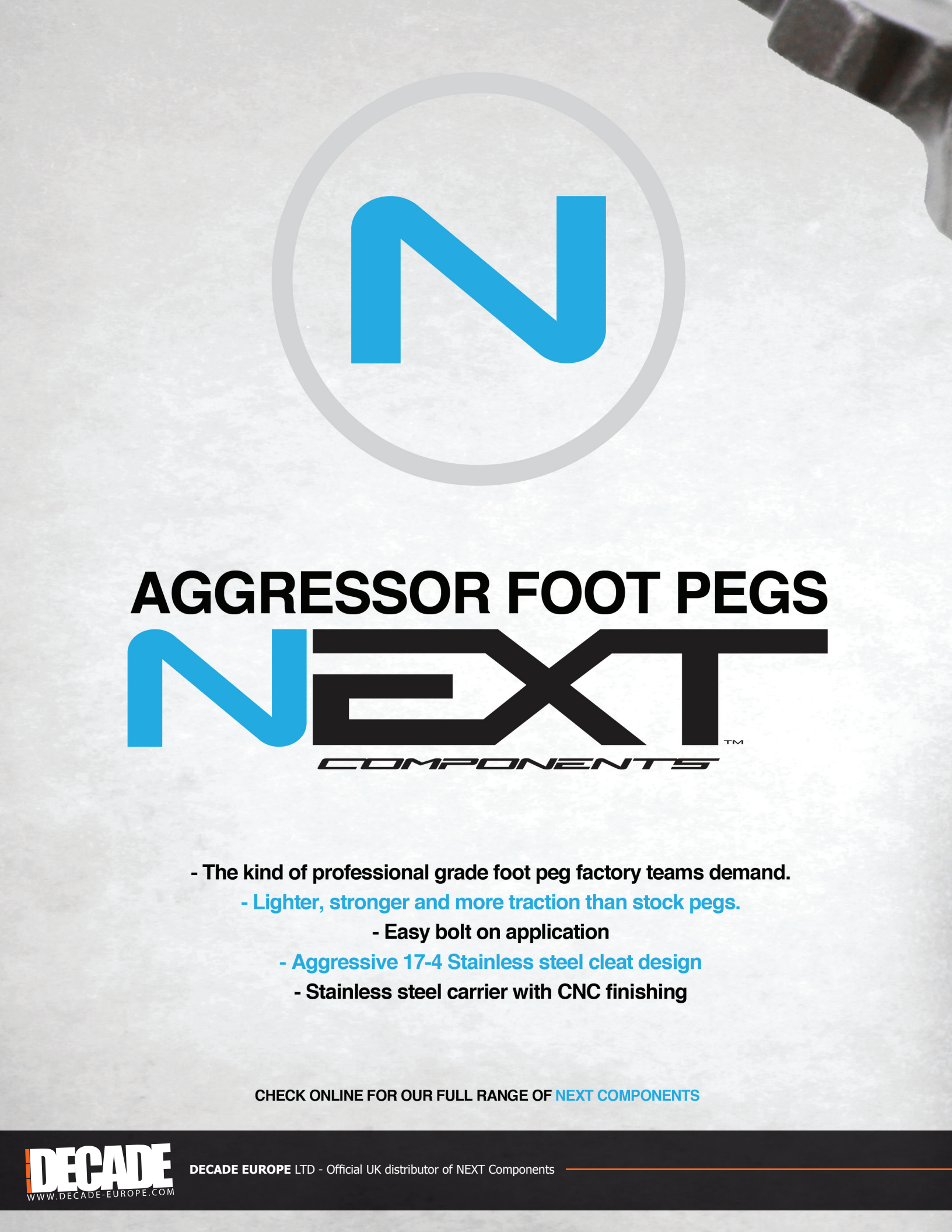
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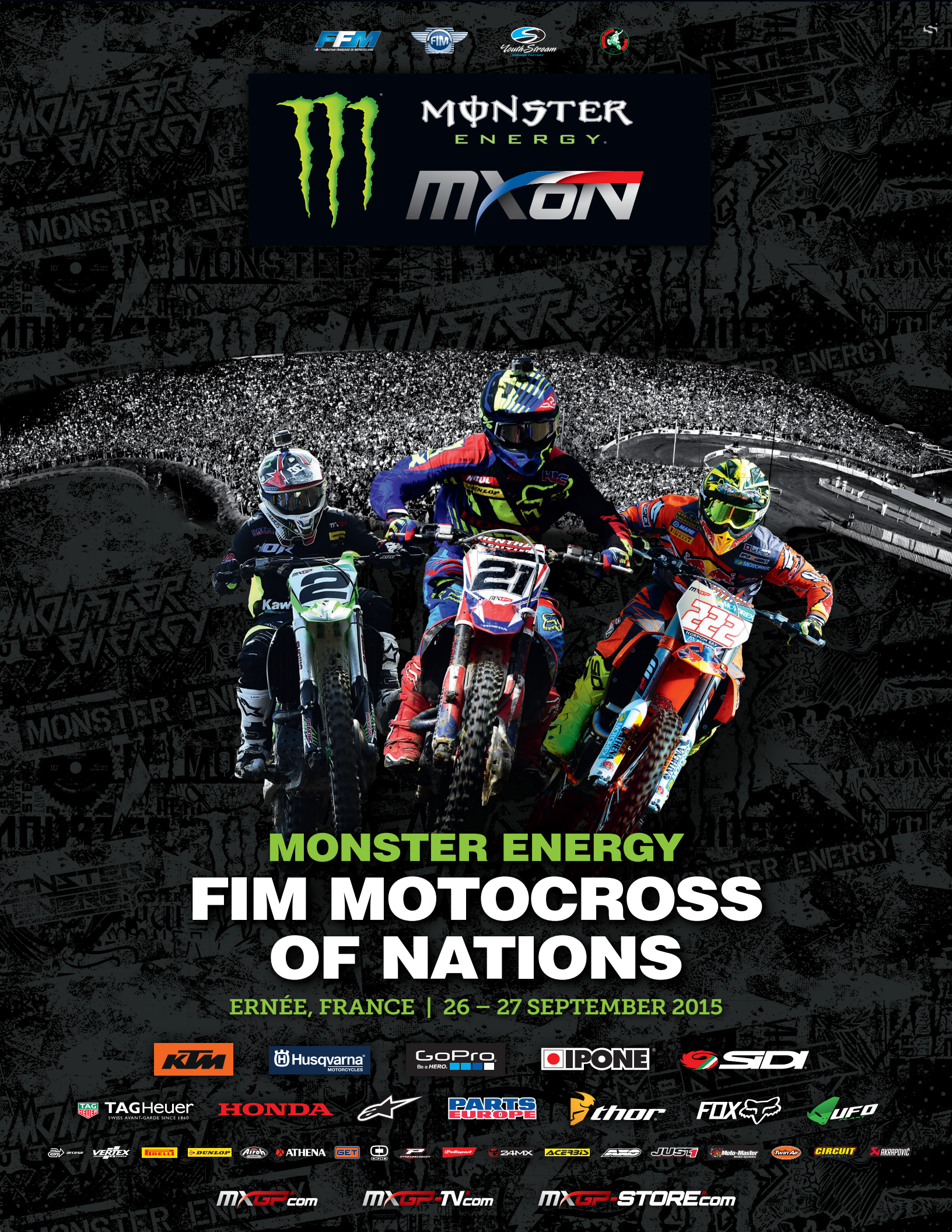
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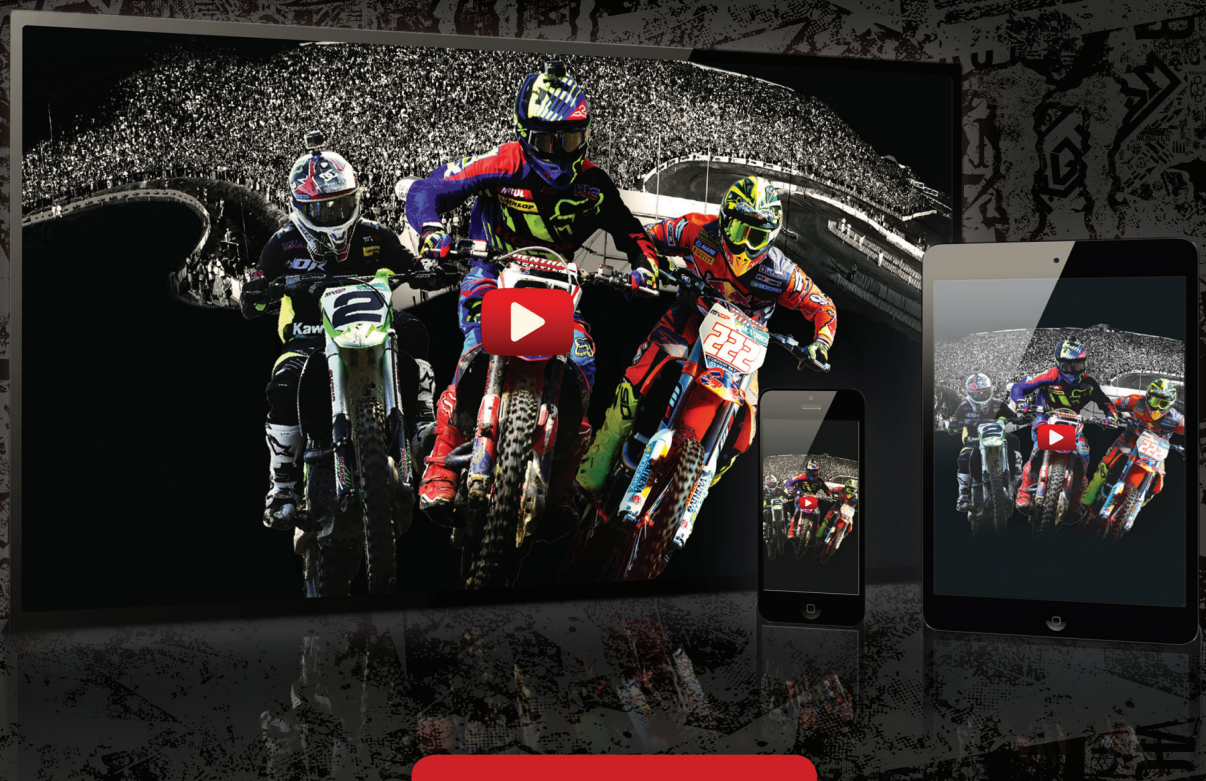

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THE DAY THE WORLD CAME TO AMERICA

STORY BY DAN LAMB IMAGES MASSIMO ZANZANI AND RAY ARCHER

The 2015 FIM Motocross World Championship series headed stateside to the very hot Glen Helen Raceway in San Bernadino, California for their season finale. With Americans qualifying first in both the MX2 and MXGP class on Saturday, the USA versus the world vibe was peeked by the time the Sunday races rolled around and the fans that attended the event would not be disappointed. In the end, America took the top two podium spots in MX2, but they could not knock the newly crowned MXGP World Champ off the top step.

In MX2 moto one, it was all Americans at the front of the pack. Through the first turn, it was the Finnish rider Harri Kullas leading the way, but by the time the 250F's roared up the hills of Glen Helen, the crowd was ignited as Jessy Nelson took the lead on his Troy Lee Designs/KTM and his teammate Shane McElrath followed him through into 2nd position with Monster/Pro Circuit/Kawasaki's Chris Alldredge making it 1-2-3 USA up front. From lap one through ten, not much changed up front, but on lap ten, Alldredge made a pass stick on McElrath for 2nd. At the end of moto one it was Nelson, Alldredge and McElrath sweeping the podium for USA and giving the crowd a shot in the arm of American pride.

The closest FIM regulars in moto one were Kawasaki's Max Anstie and Standing Construct Yamaha Yamalube's Valentin Guillod in 4th and 5th. Anstie got a horrible start, but the Brit fought for 30 + 2 to carve his way from 14th to 4th. Guillod also got a bad start and went from 10th to 5th in the moto. Both the #99 and the #92 gave the FIM fans in attendance a reason to look forward to moto two.

The big story in the FIM MX2 World Championship was the battle between the Slovenian Tim Gasjer on the Honda and the Latvian Pauls Jonass on the Factory KTM. The two came into the finale with just 18 points between them, but both struggled in the heat in moto one. By the end of the opening moto, Gasjer had finished 6th with Jonass in 10th. The spread would be 22

points heading into the final moto of the year.

When the gate dropped for MX2 moto two, it was once again the two TLD/KTM riders at the front. Nelson and McElrath got the start and simply rode away from the European field. Early in the race, Gasjer stayed close to McElrath, but with the Championship on the line, he could not take the chances needed to stop the teammates. Nelson and McElrath would finish moto two right where they started and claim 1st and 2nd overall on the day. Nelson did it with the 1-1 sweep while McElrath got his 2nd overall with a 3-2 on the day. Alldredge, who finished 2nd in the opening moto, crashed in moto two and finished 13th. His 2-13 still netted him a solid 6th overall on the day.

Behind the Americans, Gasjer gave way to a charging Guillod on lap four. Guillod seemed to gel well with the Glen Helen circuit and cruised in for a 3rd in moto two. The Swiss rider looked like the most aggressive of the FIM regulars and his 5-3 was good enough to secure him the 3rd overall in the finale.

The man of the hour was Mr. Tim Gasjer. The #243 is from the small country of Slovenia, but today it was big enough to produce the 2015 MX2 World Champion. Gasjer was 4th overall on the day, but that was more than sufficient to seal the deal on his first-ever MX2 World Championship. His team and family were throwing a big party in the pits long after the racing came to a close. Check back later this week to hear what Tim had to say to us in my post-race interview with the Champ. Possibly Supercross in his future?

In the first moto of the MXGP class, it was Star Racing/Yamaha's Cooper Webb getting the lead early. The young 250MX rider was making his MXGP 450 debut and looked very prepared for his coming out party. The #175 was passed on lap three by Monster/Kawasaki's Josh Grant, but by lap ten, the newly crowned

MXGP World Champion, Yamaha Factory Racing Yamalube's Romain Febvre, had pushed the pace and Webb back up and around Grant for the lead. By lap eleven, Grant had fallen off the leaders pace to third and an all-out war between Webb and Febvre had broken out.

It was Webb leading the next four laps and, with the two-lap card out, looked like he may hang on and carry the American flag to the moto win. Unfortunately for the North Carolinian, the Frenchman still had plenty left in his tank. The two battled back and forth, up and down Glen Helen's Mt. Saint Helens, and Febvre finally made a pass stick for the lead at the bottom of the hill. From there, Webb did not surrender, but the World Champ was just too strong for the MXGP rookie. When the checkered flag waved, Febvre gave us his patented French heel-clicker with the win and Webb crossed the line 2nd with Grant—who we thought looked visibly tired—hanging on for 3rd.

Behind Grant, Rockstar/Husqvarna's Jason Anderson rode an amazing race to finish 4th in front of Red Bull/KTM's Antonio Cairoli in 5th. While Cairoli rounded turn one in 2nd, the New Mexico born rider started with his normal 12th place start and spent the very hot moto slicing his way around the MXGP regulars. In the end, El Hombre crossed the line eleven seconds adrift of Grant, but he made it very clear that with a start, he could race for the win. For Cairoli, a 5th place in moto one was a solid return to racing after missing the last five rounds to injury.

After a great first moto, the fans lined the fences for MXGP moto two, and the riders gave the crowd their money's worth one more time. Off the gate, Cooper Webb once again launched his Yamaha into the lead. The #175 looked poised to take the second moto and the overall, but the former MXGP multi-time World Champ Antonio Cairoli was looking frisky. The #222 quickly passed his way to the lead and tried to sprint away, but his lack of fitness, his injury and Josh Grant all

Massimo Zanzani image

lap three, and by lap five, the Italian was back at the KTM truck sitting in the air conditioning. Antonio was not the only rider affected by the heat. When the checkered flag waved, only 17 of the 30 riders were still on track.

Once in the lead, Grant laid down some blazing fast Glen Helen laps, checking out to a five-second lead. The big Russian Honda pilot Evgeny Bobryshev followed Grant through, but he could not match the local Californian's pace at home. From there Grant put on an impressive display of speed and fitness and made a great case for picking up a ride for 2016. He went on to win moto two comfortably and, with his 3rd in moto one, take home 2nd overall on the day.

Behind Grant, Bobryshev was hunted down by Febvre, and at the halfway mark, the World Champ pushed the Russian back to third. Febvre put on a late-race charge to catch Grant, but in the end, a late tip over ended his bid at a second-straight 1-1 performance. As it was, the Frenchman took the 2015 USGP overall with a 1-2 performance behind Grant.

Webb led the race early but faded back to 5th before regrouping and climbing back up to finish 3rd in moto two. It was a strange moto for Webb; he literally looked like three different riders over the 30 minutes plus two laps, but in the end, all three riders were good enough to score a podium finish in Webb's first ever MXGP race on the big 450. Overall, it was a strong performance for Team USA's open rider for next weekend's Motocross of Nations. Everyone, including Cooper, felt better about USA's chances next weekend in France.

The last two USGPs at Glen Helen were a flop by all accounts. No fans, no American riders and no real interest at all in the US. The 2015 edition of the MXGP of U.S.A., though, was an overall success, and hopefully this is a step in the right direction towards reigniting the USGP traditions of old. After the event, Bud Feldkamd—President of Glen Helen Raceway—and Giuseppe Luongo from Youthstream announced that the USGP will be back at Glen Helen for 2016 and beyond. We hope to see more of you at the event.

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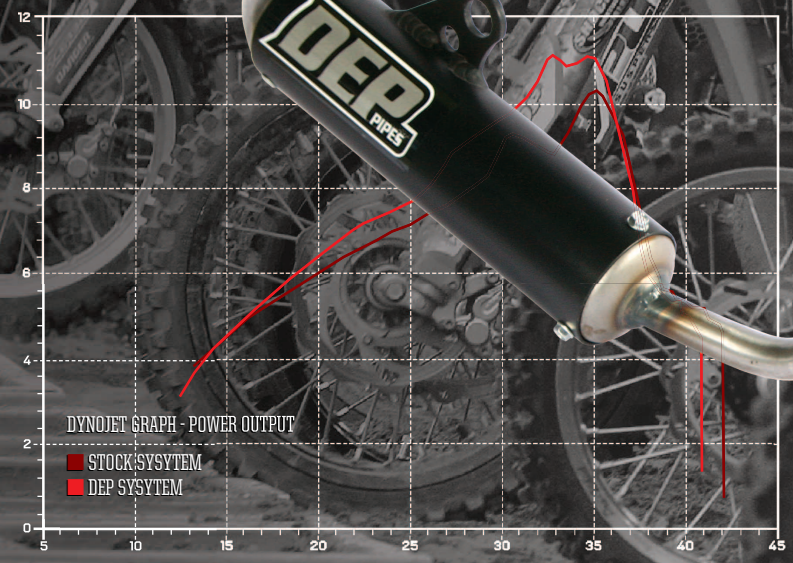

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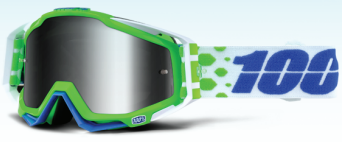

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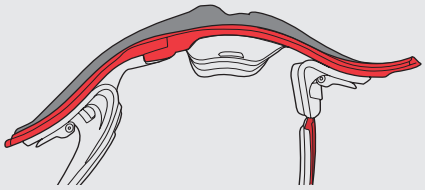

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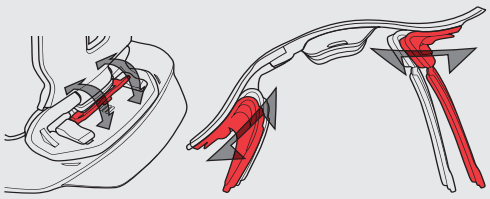

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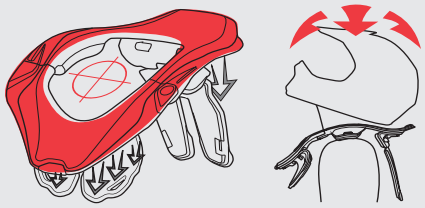

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FAVORITES AT HOME
TEAM FRANCE

Story Geoff Meyer images Archer, Zanzani and Swijgers

Team France have won the Monster Energy Motocross of Nations on two occasions. Once in 2001 at the famous Namur circuit in Belgium, and again in 2014 in Kegums, Latvia. France are a proud nation, with a long list of riders capable of representing their country.This year they not only go into their home race as defending champions, but also favorites to recapture the prestigious Chamberlain Trophy.

If you went with results of the French Motocross of Nations team, then their 2015 performances reads as 1-2-2. A World MXGP championship for in form Romain Febvre, runner-up place in the MXGP championship for Gautier Paulin and a runner-up place for Marvin Musquin in the AMA 250cc championship.

It's a strong team, no doubt about it, and a team that will put fear into most of the competitors at this year's Monster Energy Motocross of Nations. Let's take a look at their strengths and weaknesses.

Romain Febvre, what can we say about this guy? A debut season in MXGP and he wins the title, and he didn't just win it by a little, he was easily the best rider of this year's series. Slowly building in the early rounds and then taking over. It should be pointed out he started controlling the series before Clement Desalle and Antonio Cairoli got injured and has gone from strength to strength.

His debut ride at Glen Helen last weekend also ended well, beating two very fast AMA riders and two riders who are super-fast at the Glen Helen circuit. Josh Grant won a moto of the AMA 450 Nationals in 2014, and is known to be a top three guy when on form at that circuit. Cooper Webb is considered good enough to be picked for Team USA in 2015, and on a 450 machine, despite never racing one before, that is how good he is.

Febvre in my mind will go 1-1 if he has clean starts. He isn't a mistake maker, and is riding the crest of a wave that is Everts or Cairoli like. He is riding that well. If you can find his weak point it might be that this is his debut MXoN, but the ice man doesn't seem bothered by nerves and with a little luck he will race one of the legendary performances at Ernee on Sunday.

Gautier Paulin went 1-1 in Latvia last

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year and was the star of the show. Since then he has produced his best ever MXGP result with second overall, but still something doesn't seem right. His amazing speed from 2014 isn't there.

With huge backing from HRC and with Jean Michele Bayle in his corner you would think the GP wins would come, but apart from the odd occasion he hasn't looked anywhere near as fast as he was last season.

Still, he loves the MXoN, and could as easily go 1-1 as anyone. I think he might prove his doubters wrong and score pretty impressive results at Ernee, and for sure his MXoN performances of the past will give him a lot of confidence going in.

Paulin has represented France on the last six occasions and gone 1-1-5-6-2-8-1-8-5-9-1-37, not bad. You would think that anything apart from his crash riddled 37 would be enough to help France on top of the podium in Ernee.

Marvin Musquin, the most successful of the team members. Two world titles, an AMA 250 SX title, and runner-up in this year's AMA 250 championship. That is some solid stats, but at MXoN he hasn't done as well.

His USGP performances last weekend was also sub-par, but he is without question a quality rider. Maybe he can be pushed around a little as he is a gentleman, but let us hope the French crowd support him big time and the event itself brings out the best of Marvin Musquin, because at his best he could perform something very special.

Musquin has represented France on four occasions, going 11-19-8-11-39-40-5-5. Up and down in his results and that is a worry for Team France.

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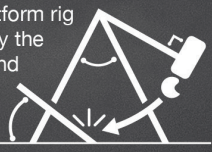

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STORY AND IMAGES GEOFF MEYER

The Monster Energy Motocross of Nations is something special. It will always be special and has been special since that very first MXdN way back in the 1940s. Countries like Sweden, Great Britain, Belgium and America have dominated this event in different eras, however in this era there isn't one team that stands head and shoulders above the rest. That makes the 2015 MXoN at the Ernee circuit in France very special. But let us go back 10 years ago and visit an MXoN that began a decade of incredible MXoN performances.

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It will be remembered as the start of the amazing run of MXoN events. A massive crowd, perfect weather and Ricky Carmichael at his all-time best. Not to mention the young New Zealander Ben Townley putting in the ride of his life.

MX1/MX1: Was it a surprise, of course it wasn't. At this time of his career nobody could touch Ricky Carmichael and his victory was an easy one. Josh Coppins put New Zealand in a strong position as did Mickael Pichon for France. Tanel Leok did his usual consistent performance and Stefan Everts rounded out the top five.

Results MX2/MX1

Ricky Carmichael (USA)—MX1

Josh Coppins (New Zealand)—MX1

Mickael Pichon (France)—MX1

Tanel Leok (Estonia)—MX1

Stefan Everts (Belgium)—MX1

Ivan Tedesco (USA)—MX2

Sebastien Tortelli (France)—MX2

Mark De Reuver (Netherlands)—MX1

Steve Ramon (Belgium)—MX2

Billy Mackenzie (Great Britain)—MX1

MX2/Open: The second moto showed what a talent Ben Townley was, although an early mistake by Kevin Windham had Team USA in trouble. The veteran American crashed twice early as he could only manage fifth position. New Zealand, Belgium, France and America were all in contention going into the final moto. Steve Ramon rode well for third overall, and his team-mate Strijbos was back in sixth position. Belgium and outside chance also.

MX2/Open results

Ben Townley (New Zealand)—Open

David Vuillemin (France)—Open

Steve Ramon (Belgium)—MX2

David Philippaerts (Italy)—Open

Kevin Windham (USA)—Open

Kevin Strijbos (Belgium)—Open

Javier Garcia Veco (Spain)—Open

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Yoshitaka Atsuta (Japan)—Open

Matti Seistola (Finland)—MX2

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MOTOREX

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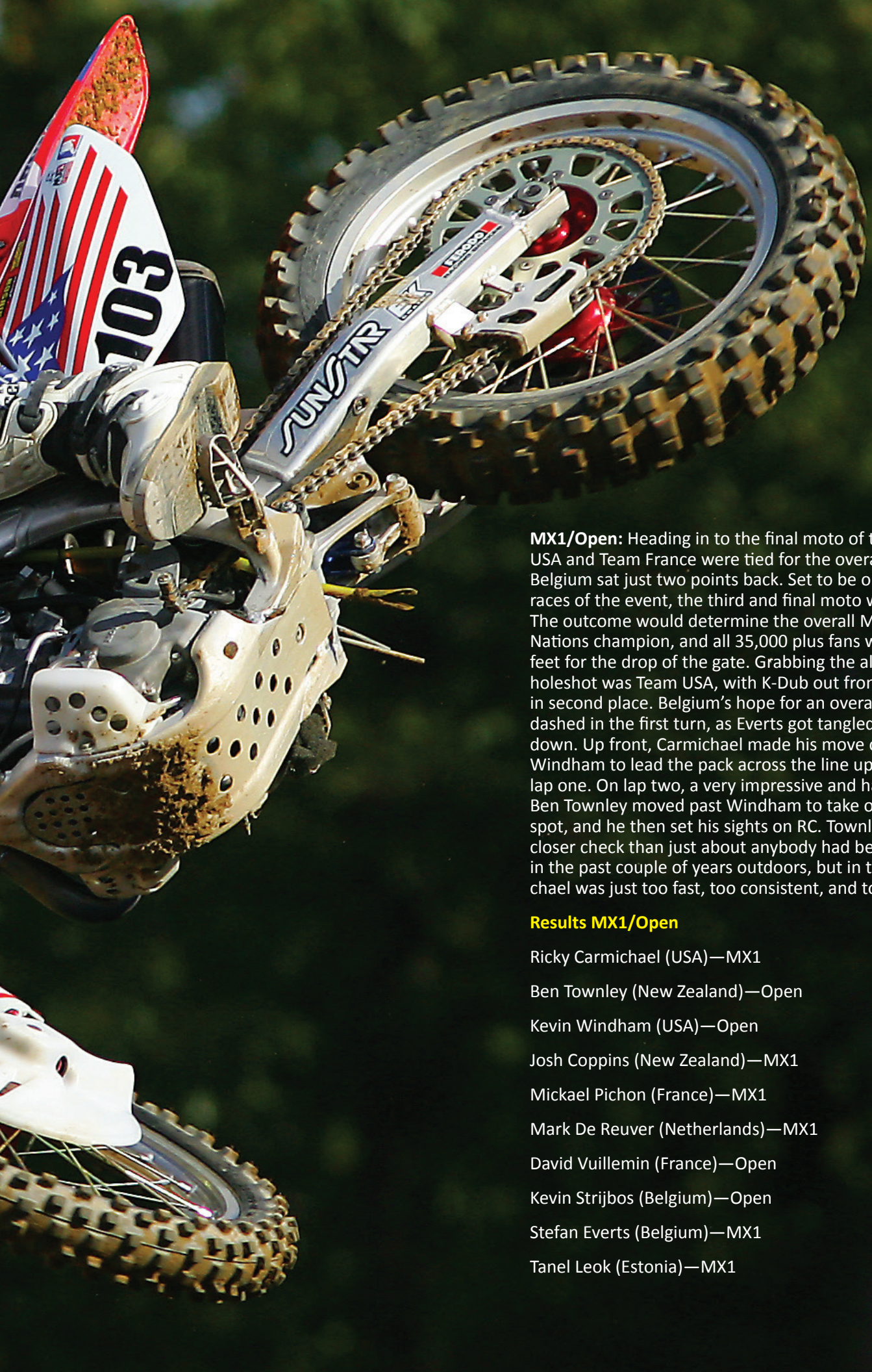

MX1/Open: Heading in to the final moto of the day, Team USA and Team France were tied for the overall win and team Belgium sat just two points back. Set to be one of the best races of the event, the third and final moto went to the line. The outcome would determine the overall Motocross des Nations champion, and all 35,000 plus fans were on their feet for the drop of the gate. Grabbing the all-important holeshot was Team USA, with K-Dub out front and RC close in second place. Belgium's hope for an overall victory was dashed in the first turn, as Everts got tangled up and went down. Up front, Carmichael made his move on teammate Windham to lead the pack across the line upon the close of lap one. On lap two, a very impressive and hard-charging Ben Townley moved past Windham to take over the second spot, and he then set his sights on RC. Townley kept RC in closer check than just about anybody had been able to do in the past couple of years outdoors, but in the end, Carmichael was just too fast, too consistent, and too tough.

Results MX1/Open

Ricky Carmichael (USA)—MX1

Ben Townley (New Zealand)—Open

Kevin Windham (USA)—Open

Josh Coppins (New Zealand)—MX1

Mickael Pichon (France)—MX1

Mark De Reuver (Netherlands)—MX1

David Vuillemin (France)—Open

Kevin Strijbos (Belgium)—Open

Stefan Everts (Belgium)—MX1

Tanel Leok (Estonia)—MX1

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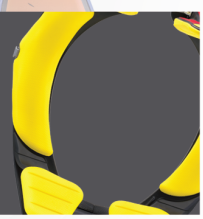

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